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They Need Not Feel Alone

Part of my job as national director of Virtual Ministries for Faculty Commons is to find ways to connect with and encourage more than 8000 Christian professors, most of whom lack Campus Crusade staff on their campuses. We minister to them “virtually.”

I send Ministry Minutes out each week: first-person essays about life as a Christian professor. Many receive it by email; they tell me it helps to know other professors are facing similar challenges.

Dr. Sarah Hamersma (*left*) sent me an essay: “Seeking Tenure” that I could distribute as a Ministry Minute. She is in her sixth year at the University of Florida as an economics professor. Next year she will find out if she is tenured and can stay — or must leave.



Her essay raised a yellow flag in my mind: What if publishing her essay meant that she would somehow be denied tenure?

For professors at some universities, being visible about one’s faith can cause repercussions:

- Less favorable reviews by fellow professors;
- Being burdened with extra classes or unpopular courses because “someone’s got to teach them;”
- Denial of promotion or merit raises;
- Denial of tenure.

Discrimination on religious grounds is never listed as the *official* cause of those actions. And it’s not universal — some universities are very accommodating of all viewpoints, including those by Christians. But the possibility of a reaction lurks in the background, and each Christian professor must face this.

So, I contacted Sarah to make sure that she wanted to have her faith in Christ be “advertised” on our websites. She echoed to me what she wrote in her essay:

“Hopefully, by God’s grace, I will get tenure.”

She sees her work as a professor as being in line with her faith:

- “I’m here to build knowledge, not my own empire.”
- “If I truly care about society, I will want to influence it through my writing.”
- “I will make dear friends along the way — some of whom I would never meet in a church!”

Each day, thousands of Christian professors are living out their faith, seeking to serve students and colleagues as God leads.

Thanks for making it possible to bring them good news!

Steve & Sarah Pogue